

~~marry and beget, but they must abstain from hunting, gambling, feasting, commerce, and secular amusements, and accept annual visitation and moral scrutiny by their ecclesiastical superiors.~~

To regulate lay conduct a system of domiciliary visits was established: one or another of the elders visited, yearly, each house in the quarter assigned to him, and questioned the occupants on all phases of their lives. Consistory and Council joined in the prohibition of gambling, card-playing, profanity, drunkenness, the frequenting of taverns, dancing (which was then enhanced by kisses and embraces), indecent or irreligious songs, excess in entertainment, extravagance in living, immodesty in dress. The allowable color and quantity of clothing, and the number of dishes permissible at a meal, were specified by law. Jewelry and lace were frowned upon. A woman was jailed for arranging her hair to an immoral height.<sup>34</sup> Theatrical performances were limited to religious plays, and then these too were forbidden. Children were to be named not after saints in the Catholic calendar but preferably after Old Testament characters; an obstinate father served four days in prison for insisting on naming his son Claude instead of Abraham.<sup>35</sup> Censorship of the press was taken over from Catholic and secular precedents, and enlarged (1560): books of erroneous religious doctrine, or of immoral tendency, were banned; Montaigne's *Essays* and Rousseau's *Émile* were later to fall under this proscription. To speak disrespectfully of Calvin or the clergy was a crime.<sup>36</sup> A first violation of these ordinances was punished with a reprimand, further violation with fines, persistent violation with imprisonment or banishment. Fornication was to be punished with exile or drowning; adultery, blasphemy, or idolatry, with death. In one extraordinary instance a child was beheaded for striking its parents.<sup>37</sup> In the years 1558-59 there were 414 prosecutions for moral offenses; between 1542 and 1546 there were seventy-six banishments and fifty-eight executions; the total population of Geneva was then about 20,000.<sup>38</sup> As everywhere in the sixteenth century, torture was often used to obtain confessions or evidence.

Regulation was extended to education, society, and the economic life. Calvin established schools and an academy, searched through Western Europe for good teachers of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and theology, and trained young ministers who carried his gospel into France, Holland, Scotland, and England with all the ardor and devotion of Jesuit missionaries in Asia; in eleven years (1555-66) Geneva sent 161 such envoys into France, many of whom sang Huguenot psalms as they suffered martyrdom. Calvin considered class divisions natural, and his legislation protected rank and dignity by prescribing the quality of dress, and the limits of activity for each class.<sup>39</sup> Every person was expected to accept his place in society, and to perform its duties without envy of his betters or complaint of his lot. Begging was banned, and

indiscriminate charity was replaced by careful communal administration of poor relief.

Calvinism gave to hard work, sobriety, diligence, frugality, and thrift a religious sanction and laurel that may have shared in developing the industrious temper of the modern Protestant businessman; but this relationship has been overstressed.<sup>40</sup> Capitalism was more highly developed in Catholic Florence and Flanders before the Reformation than in Calvin's Geneva. Calvin rejected individualism in economics as well as in religion and morals. The unit of society, in his view, was not the free individual (with whom Luther had begun his revolt) but the city-state community, whose members were bound to it in rigorous law and discipline. "No member of the Christian community," he wrote, "holds his gifts to himself, or for his private use, but shares them among his fellow members; nor does he derive benefit save from those things which proceed from the common profit of the body as a whole."<sup>41</sup> He had no sympathy with acquisitive speculation or ruthless accumulation.<sup>42</sup> Like some late-medieval Catholic theorists, he permitted interest on loans, but in theory he limited it to 5 per cent, and urged loans without interest to necessitous individuals or the state.<sup>43</sup> With his approval the Consistory punished engrossers, monopolists, and lenders who charged excessive interest; it fixed prices for food and clothes and surgical operations; it censured or fined merchants who defrauded their clients, dealers who skimmed their measures, clothiers who cut their cloth too short.<sup>44</sup> Sometimes the regime moved toward state socialism: the Venerable Company established a bank, and conducted some industries.<sup>45</sup>

If we bear these limiting factors in mind, we may admit a quiet and growing entente between Calvinism and business. Calvin could not long have kept his leadership had he obstructed the commercial development of a city whose commerce was its life. He adjusted himself to the situation, allowed interest charges of 10 per cent, and recommended state loans to finance the introduction or expansion of private industry, as in the manufacture of clothing or the production of silk. Commercial centers like Antwerp, Amsterdam, and London took readily to the first modern religion that accepted the modern economy. Calvinism took the middle classes into its fold, and grew with their growth.

What were the results of Calvin's rule? The difficulties of enforcement must have been extreme, for never in history had such strict virtue been required of a city. A considerable party opposed the regimen, even to the point of open revolt, but a substantial number of influential citizens must have supported it, if only on the general theory of morals—that others need them. The influx of French Huguenots and other Protestants must have strengthened Calvin's hand; and the limitation of the experiment to Geneva and its hinterland raised the chances of success. ~~The recurrent fear of invasion and~~

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why would you term Calvin's period of leadership a "Theocracy"?
2. How would you describe Calvinist society, tolerant or intolerant? Explain your answer.
3. What were some of the positive aspects of Calvin's society?
4. What were some of the negative aspects of life in Geneva?
5. Why did Servetus upset both Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church?
6. What was ultimately Servetus fate?

